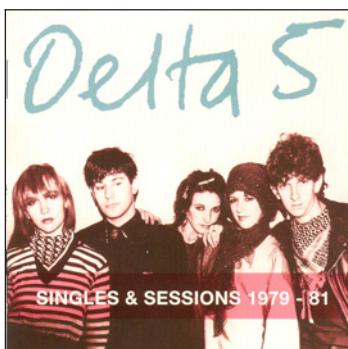


[SPIN THIS]



with them. Three live tracks give a better indication of the band's power.

Curtis Ross

JENNY LEWIS WITH THE WATSON TWINS: RABBIT FUR COAT (TEAM LOVE) B+; THE ELECTED: SUN, SUN, SUN (SUB POP) B-

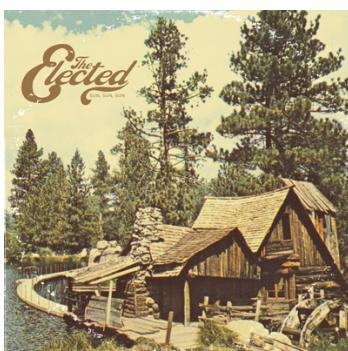
How long can Rilo Kiley pull it off, standing with one foot in the gutter and the other one on the red carpet? Give 'em credit: When they swung for the fences on '04's "More Adventurous," they titled the leadoff track "It's a Hit" with a wink and a nod to the indie hipsters: "We're not really selling out — we're just having a laugh!"

As the impossibly adorable girl-next-door in the band, Jenny Lewis gets most of the attention, and "Rabbit Fur Coat" takes that to the bank. Lewis flavors her lovely, country-tinged pop with a dash of gospel, and puts her sugar-sweet voice to use questioning life, the universe and everything. That it's all set to sing-along melodies doesn't necessarily make Lewis' self-doubt ring less true; it just makes it harder to ignore the gnawing sense that she's having her cake and eating it, too.

With his "other" band, The Elected, Rilo Kiley band mate Blake Sennett pulls off something truly special: a record so painstakingly perfect as to have almost no character whatsoever. Its sun-kissed California country-pop is polished to within an inch of its bittersweet life, leaving Sennett somewhere between Gram Parsons and a used car salesman.

When he gets excited, his voice can match the frayed, desperate wail of Bright Eyes' Conor Oberst (the tail end of "Would You Come With Me") or the soaring melodrama of Freddie Mercury ("Biggest Star," "Did Me Good"), but mostly Sennett just cruises safely down the middle of the road. For all its charms, the disc feels like the musical equivalent of silicone breasts or the Big Mac they show on the commercial: It's too flawless to be real.

Rommie Johnson



DELTA 5: SINGLES & SESSIONS 1979-'81 (KILL ROCK STARS) B+

Delta 5 may be but a post-punk footnote, but it's a worthwhile one.

The quintet came up in Leeds, England, amid the politically-charged atmosphere of late-'70s, as did The Mekons and Gang of Four. Bassist-singer Ros Allen was an early member of The Mekons, and guitarist Alan Riggs spikes the band's dance-punk with jagged shards of noise a la Go4's Andy Gill.

Also, like the Gang, D5's lyrics dwell on the intersections and overlappings of the personal and political: Love is not a simple matter here, and emotion is only part of it.

The rather polite production on these singles and radio sessions blunts the group's impact a bit — Au Pairs would mop the leftist-disco's floor



Matador

Belle And Sebastian's 'Pursuit' Is Pop Bliss

BELLE AND SEBASTIAN: THE LIFE PURSUIT (MATADOR) A

By CURTIS ROSS
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Bands, even great ones, have their moment and once it's over, it's over. When the magic dies — through personnel changes, dying inspiration or the dreaded "artistic growth" — it ain't coming back.

"The Life Pursuit" is the exception. "Dear Catastrophe Waitress" (2003) showed the Scottish troupe was headed in the right direction again after the gloomy "Fold Your Hands Child, You Walk Like a Peasant" (2000) and the static "Storytelling" (2002). With "The Life Pursuit," the band not only is back on track, it's passing everything in sight.

"Pursuit" reinstates some of the melancholy that was absent from "Waitress"; but like the band's earlier work, it balances the gray with rainbow-hued melodies, smart and funny lyrics and a one-of-a-kind knack for sheer pop glory.

With producer Tony Hoffer (Air, Beck, Supergrass), the band adds touches of blues, jazz and soul ('60s and '70s) to its palette. "Song for Sunshine" is a dead ringer for Shuggie Otis' airy funk. Not that the



band has abandoned its '60s obsessions: "The Blues Are Still Blue" could fit in nicely on The Kinks' 1966 masterpiece, "Face to Face."

Whatever the band's musical influences, though, Stuart Murdoch's lyrical perspective is his alone. On "White Collar Boy," he puts a comically low-budget, English spin on the familiar staid-man/wild-woman scenario (think director Jonathan Demme's "Something Wild"); and who else but Murdoch would set a pop song's story line in seminary ("Act of the Apostle")?

"The Life Pursuit" is a reassuring return to Belle and Sebastian's signature pop bliss. God bless them.

[TOP 5]

POP SINGLES

1. Check On It, Beyoncé Featuring Slim Thug
2. You're Beautiful, James Blunt
3. Grillz, Nelly Featuring Paul Wall, Ali & Gipp
4. Temperature, Sean Paul
5. Be Without You, Mary J. Blige

POP ALBUMS

1. Ghetto Classics, Jaheim
2. Curious George (Soundtrack), Jack Johnson
3. The Greatest Songs Of The Fifties, Barry Manilow
4. The Breakthrough, Mary J. Blige
5. Amore, Andrea Bocelli

R&B SINGLES

1. Be Without You, Mary J. Blige
2. Unpredictable, Jamie Foxx Featuring Ludacris
3. Yo (Excuse Me Miss), Chris Brown
4. So Sick, Ne-Yo
5. Check On It, Beyoncé Featuring Slim Thug

R&B ALBUMS

1. Ghetto Classics, Jaheim
2. Unpredictable, Jamie Foxx
3. The Breakthrough, Mary J. Blige
4. In My Mind, Heather Headley
5. On Top Of Our Game, Dem Franchize Boyz

COUNTRY SINGLES

1. When I Get Where I'm Going, Brad Paisley Featuring Dolly Parton
2. Your Man, Josh Turner
3. Jesus, Take the Wheel, Carrie Underwood
4. Living In Fast Forward, Kenny Chesney
5. What Hurts The Most, Rascal Flatts

COUNTRY ALBUMS

1. Some Hearts, Carrie Underwood
2. Your Man, Josh Turner
3. Feels Like Today, Rascal Flatts
4. Totally Country 5, Various Artists
5. The Legend Of Johnny Cash, Johnny Cash

MODERN ROCK TRACKS

1. Every Day Is Exactly The Same, Nine Inch Nails
2. Wasteland, 10 Years
3. Dance, Dance, Fall Out Boy
4. Perfect Situation, Weezer
5. Hypnotize, System Of A Down

LATIN ALBUMS

1. Barrio Fino: En Directo, Daddy Yankee
2. Masterpiece, Rakim & Ken-Y
3. Nuestro Amor, RBD
4. Rebelde, RBD
5. Da Hitman Presents Reggaeton Latino, Don Omar

Source: Billboard Magazine, March 4